

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 07381 211341Z

60

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /057 W

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R 101510Z NDT 76

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4635

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 7381

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TS

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA SCHEDULED TO DELIVER
"IMPORTANT MESSAGE"

1. RADIO TUNIS MORNING NEWS AND THE PRDSS ANNOUNCED OCTOBER 20 THAT PRIME MINISTER HEDI NOUIRA WILL DELIVER AN "IMPORTANT MESSAGE IN THE NAME OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC" TO THE NATIONAL ASSFDBLY ON OCTOBER 26. THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WILL RECONVENE THAT DAY AFTER ITS SUMMER RECESS AND WOULD NORMALLY HAVE BEEN ADDRESSED BY THE PRESEIDENT PERSONALLY.
2. WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA UNDERGOING MEDICAL TREATMENT IN GENEVA (SEE TUNIS 7166) AND TUNISIANS CONSCIOUS OF HIS POOR HEALTH, THIS ANNOUNCEMENT HAS GIVEN RISE TO SPECULATION THAT NOUIRA WILL ANNOUNCE THAT BOURGUIBA IS EITHER STEPPING DOWN FROM THE PRESIDENCY BECAUSE OF ILL HALTH OR THAT HE WILL REMAIN IN SWITZERLAND FOR A LENGTHY PERIOD FOR TREATMENT.
3. WE HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT EITHER OF THESE ANNOUNCEMENTS WILL BE MADE AND THE "IMPORTANT MESSAGE IN THE NAME OF THE PRESIDENT" COULD WELL BE A ROUTINE STATEMENT OF CURRENT POLICY WITH A HCUMIBT FANFARE TO MAKE IT SOUND MORE IMPRESSIVE.
4. IN ADDITION, THERE IS REMPANT SPECULATION HERE THAT THE PORT CALLS OF THE NIMITZ AND SOUTH CAROLINA AND

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DEPSECDEF CLEMENTS' BRIEF VISIT WERE DIRECTLY RELATED
TO THE PRESIDENT'S POOR HEALTH AND U.S. CONCERN OVER
PRESERVATION OF DOMESTIC STABILITY IN TUNISIA. IN
RESPONSE TO DIRECT INQUIRIES FROM VARIOUS EMBASSIES,
WE HAVE SIMPLY SAID NO SIGNIFICANCE TO VISITS OCCURRING
TO THE SAME TIME AND THAT THEY MERELY CONTINUATION OF
OUR STANDING PRACTICE OF HAVING U.S. SIXTH FLEET SHIPS
VISIT TUNISIA AND OF HIGHLEVEL OFFICIAL CONTACT FOR
ON-GOING AND REGULAR CONSULTATIONS.
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NNN

*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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